DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 283 493 HE 020 519

AUTHOR Cottrell, Ann Baker
TITLE School at Mid-Life in the U.S. and Italy: Mature Women in Post-Compulsory Degree Programs.
PUB DATE Aug 85
NOTE 35p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association (Washington, D.C., August 26-30, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Students; *College Attendance; Comparative Analysis; *Cultural Differences; *Enrollment Influences; *Females; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Nontraditional Students; Reentry Students; Student Problems
IDENTIFIERS *Italy; *United States

ABSTRACT

College attendance by Italian and American women over age 30 is compared, and attention is directed to whether mature Italian and U.S. women who continue their education do so for similar reasons and whether they experience similar problems. The analysis is based on two studies of women over 30 in post-compulsory degree programs: (1) a study on 251 mature female undergraduate and graduate students at San Diego State University, and (2) an investigation of 49 women at the university and in several higher secondary school programs in Trieste, Italy. Respondents' motives for continuing their education were determined, including the importance of: learning new things, personal satisfaction, improved self-image, career preparation, and advancing/changing careers. The following types of problems were addressed: role conflicts, inadequate academic preparation, institutional inadequacies, financial problems, and relationship problems. It was found that Italian women over age 30 were less likely than their American counterparts to resume post-compulsory education due to cultural differences, especially the more traditional role expectations of Italian women of this age grouping. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED283493

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SCHOOL AT MID-LIFE IN THE U.S. AND ITALY: Mature Women in Post-Compulsory Degree Programs

Ann Baker Cottrell
San Diego State University

One of the most noteworthy recent trends in American higher education is the return of mature women to college campuses. This has generated a great deal of scholarly research and media attention. In Italy women over 30 are far less likely to be pursuing a higher education, and there is virtually no research on the topic.[1]

This paper first explores why Italian women are less likely than American to pursue an education after age 30 using comparative institutional and national data. Secondly, the paper investigates whether mature women who do continue their education in these two countries do so for similar reasons and whether they experience similar problems in doing so. This is based on two studies of women over 30 in post-compulsory degree programs. One is a study of mature female undergraduate and graduate students at San Diego State University (Pommerenke, 1984), the other a study of women at the University and in several higher secondary school programs in Trieste, Italy.

ENROLLMENT OF MATURE FEMALE STUDENTS

The difference in enrollment rates of older students, especially women, in the U.S. and Italy is evident in data from the institutions included in the two studies and in national data. As Table One shows, the proportion of women over 25 at San Diego State University is six times that at Trieste University. And it is likely that the Trieste data overstimates the number of students, especially older students, actually studying. Since students are kept on the list of the currently

1 While there is little literature on this aspect of women in Italian, literature in English on either Italian education or Italian women is also scarce. SDSU's card catalog includes ten books on education in Italy (nothing after 1977) compared to 51 on education in India. There are two books on women in Italy (on Renaissance women and peasant women). Periodical literature is similarly lacking.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
ANN BAKER COTTRELL
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

HE 020 519

enrolled for eight years after the last class taken, some of the students may have quit without formally withdrawing.

The higher level of involvement for mature American women is also evident in comparison of data for the six San Diego area community colleges with that for university level colleges and higher secondary schools in Trieste. The great variation in enrollment of women over 25 in the Trieste higher secondary schools, 0 to 33%, partially obscures the lower Italian rate. The higher Italian figures in Table One reflect a) an unusual situation where nurses were encouraged to study for reclassification and b) the fact that a few individuals in a school of several hundred students alter proportions in a way not possible in community colleges with over 20,000 students. This is seen in the school of physical therapy where 17% of students were women over 25 in 1983, but only 3% fit this description a year later.

Table 1: Women 25 and Older as a Percent of Total Enrollment in 1982.

Institution	Trieste	San Diego
University	3	18
University Level Colleges		
Community College	--	22-30(a)
School of Social Services	4	--
School of Physical Therapy	17	--
Higher Secondary Schools		
Public Licei	0	--
Private Secondary Institutes	2-25	--
Istituti Magistrali (Teacher training institutes)	1	--
Hospital Nursing Program	33 (b)	--

a) Women over 25 as a percent of students enrolled in courses for credit, but not necessarily in diploma or degree programs.
b) The percent of older women in this program is unusual. It occurred because the lowest classification of nurse had been abolished and those nurses were encouraged to study for reclassification. The program, offered at the hospital as part of work time, was equivalent to a higher secondary school diploma program.

Since Trieste is a conservative provincial city, data from its schools may underestimate the involvement of older Italian women in post-compulsory education nationally. Balbo and Erges, University of Milan, state that "older women have re-entered institutions of higher education in

large numbers" (p. 21) and Balbo reports teaching women's studies courses to "thousands of such adult students, mostly women" in the 1970s (1982:763).[2] Amato, University of Rome, reports university efforts to accomodate large numbers of "working students" and reports knowing many older females (personal correspondance). Similarly, while the day program at the Milan school of social services had a low enrollment of older students, similar to that in Trieste, 44% of students in the evening program were over 25. The Trieste school had no evening program.

National statistics, while not directly comparable, substantiate the pattern found in Trieste and San Diego; mature American women are more likely to be in degree programs than Italian women. In 1980 more than one-third of American university/college students were over 25 (Manpower Comments:26) and 40% of those at two year community colleges were older (Higher Education Daily:1). Women were a majority of American students 35 and older; 65% in 1978 (Heyns and Bird:23). The latest Italian data available in 1982 indicated that the proportion of first year university students over 25 remained about 10% from 1960 to 1974. In 1965 only one-third of those entering students over 25 were women (ISTAT). In the late '70s 61% of female university graduates were under 24 compared to 32% of male graduates, suggesting that women were still a minority of older university students.

FACTORS AFFECTING ENROLLMENT RATES OF MATURE WOMEN

In both Italy and the U.S. social forces such as the women's movement, increased number of two income families, smaller families, and post-industrial jobs requiring new and updated skills have challenged traditional female roles and encouraged additional study. Yet far fewer women in Italy pursue an education in mid-life. This section discusses factors influencing the different rate of participation in formal education among Italian and American women after age 30.

ELIGIBILITY

The pool of eligible women is one factor affecting the rate of women returning to university after an interruption. The significantly lower percent of Italian university-age women enrolled

---

2 Many, if not most, were participants in "100 hours", not degree students. This union sponsored education program for workers was later opened to housewives.

in higher education, compared to Americans, might suggest that a larger percent of Italian women eligible did not pursue university studies at the appropriate age . In fact, this is not the case. A higher secondary school diploma is required for admission to university or university level colleges in both countries. Higher secondary school, compulsory in the U.S., is not so in Italy. Italian compulsory education extends only through lower secondary school and there is a sharp drop in school enrollment among both males and females at age 13. Thus, a much smaller percentage of Italian girls have the prerequisite education to pursue a higher education than American girls. As Table Two shows, in 1960 only one-quarter of 15 year old Italian girls were enrolled in school and would be eligible for university if they graduated. The proportion has increased, but still in 1975 less than half Italian 15 year olds were enrolled compared to virtually all American girls that age in both years.

TABLE 2: Percentage of girls enrolled in school at specific ages.

Year	12 year olds (lower secondary)[a]		15 year olds (higher secondary)		20-24 (university level)[b]	
	Italy	U.S.	Italy	U.S.	Italy	U.S.
1959-60	--	--	24[c]	98[d]	4	24
1965-6	79		36[a]	93[d]	7	31
1969-70	--	100	--	98[a]	13	41
1972-3	78	--	51[a]	--	--	--
1975-6	98	102	54[a]	99[a]	20	53

a) OECD, 1981
b) UNESCO - While UNESCO's American figures are higher than similar data in the Digest of Educational Statistics and its Italian figures lower than Dei and Rossi's, the difference in enrollment of college age Americans and Italians is unaffected.c) Zanattad) Digest of Educational Statistics

A much smaller proportion of Italian girls is eligible to pursue higher education. But since upper secondary schooling is, itself, selective, a much higher proportion of those eligible for university level studies actually enrolls. Eighty percent of Italians who completed higher secondary school went on to university in 1971 (Bruno, 37) compared to 33% of American high school graduates in 1975 (Conditions of Education, 132) and 50% in 1980 (Standard Education

(Standard Education Almanac, 328). The pool of women eligible for university level studies who have not been to university is much smaller in Italy.

The pool of adult Italians who might return to university has been enlarged by opening of all university faculties (*facolta*) to graduates of any five year higher secondary program.[3] Prior to 1969, choice of higher secondary school in the pre-university track determined which university faculty one could enter. For example, graduates of teacher training and art schools could enter only two faculties but graduates of classical high schools (*licei*) could enroll in all but two. In 1969 this inequity was erased for students with a five year diploma. Graduates of the four year teacher training institute (*magistrali*) are still restricted in choice of faculty to the faculty of education (*magistero*) unless they complete a fifth year *corso integrativo*. Some who went to university, as well as some who did not, have enrolled now that new fields of study are open to them. This partly explains the greatly increased enrollment at Italian universities during the 1970s. (Sartori) Some women who did not take advantage of the liberalized access to university when the change was made might be more likely to enroll now than they would have had the change not been made.

Since higher secondary schooling is not compulsory in Italy and this is the level at which preparation for typically female careers such as teaching and nursing occurs, women who did not enter or complete higher secondary school must be included in those eligible to resume post-compulsory study. If such women are added to the pool of women eligible to re-enter university a far greater number are potential re-entry students.

Although it is difficult to calculate the exact number of potential re-entry women, there are obviously many in both countries. This does not appear to be a major factor explaining the different rates of enrollment of mature women.

---

[3]The Italian term *facolta* refers to the major divisions within Italian universities, e.g., the faculty of law, medicine or letters, rather than to the entire body of professors as does the American term "faculty."

WOMEN'S ROLES

Familial and Extra-familial roles. A major reason Italian women are less likely than American women to continue their education in mid-life is their more traditional gender roles. Italian women are more likely than Americans to be married. Although the proportion of never-married women has been about the same (U.N. Demographic Yearbook:840 and 922), a significantly greater proportion of American women are divorced. Divorce has been legal in Italy since 1970, yet separation and divorce are extremely rare. In 1980, for every 1,000 married Italian women two were separated and less than one divorced compared to 48 separated and 131 divorced per 1,000 married American women. (Based on ISTAT and UN Demographic Yearbook data). The stereotype that Italian women are kept home by many children, however, is no longer true. Italian women have a lower birthrate than American women (49 compared to 61). (UN Demographic Yearbook, 1983)

Italian women's lives are also more home-centered, especially among those over 30. Women's social life has traditionally taken place within the family, and the family remains the fundamental institution in Italy (Barzini, Parsons). Loyalty to family is demanded of all, but women, who have the primary responsibility for holding it together, have a central and particularly revered position. The resulting sense of importance and reward diminishes women's incentives to change roles. While the centrality of family is diminishing in urban areas and its solidarity is breaking down, family and events associated with motherhood remain primary for most Italian women, more so than for other Europeans (Antoniotti et al, Donati, Laurenzi, Saraceno 1979). In fact, Donati argues, many women attach themselves more depserately to the nuclear family than in an earlier period precisely because family and community networks have broken down.

The dominance of the home in Italian women's lives is underscored by the fact that 70% or more of Italian women report no organizational affiliation of any kind. (Boileau and Moretti; Gilmozzi; Index to International Public Opinion, 1982-3) Italian women also have a lower rate of economic activity outside the home than Americans. Less than half (45.6%) of Italian women 25-64 were gainfully employed in 1982 compared to 61% of American. This difference increased

between 1960 and 1980 as many American women entered the labor force. But the gap is narrowing again, for rates of employment among younger women are more similar. (International Labor Organization, 1983:12 and 33).

Domestic Roles. Italians consistently argued in conversation and interviews that Italian women are less likely to return to school/university because it is "more difficult" for them than for American women. The main reason given was the greater expectation of commitment to the domestic role among Italian women and their families. Italians also believed that life is more convenient and efficient and child care less of a problem for Americans.

Italian women do devote more energy to domestic activities than American women. They spend more time on many household tasks both because of fewer technological aids and higher standards. For example, clothes dryers are not common, but many women iron everything, including underwear. Daily shopping is virtually a necessity, due to limits to how much one can carry if shopping on foot or by bus, small refrigerators and importance placed on fresh food.

Some activities, such as shopping, are more complicated logistically in Italy. Shopping often entails the more personal but time consuming stops at numerous small shops rather than one-stop shopping. For those who drive, finding a parking place in urban areas can take longer than shopping. (Public transportation, though, is far superior to that in most American cities) Finally, stores are closed from 1-4, after 8 p.m., and Sundays. In Trieste stores are also closed Mondays and food stores close Monday and Wednesday afternoons. Thus one's schedule is often built around shopping rather than the other way around.

That Italian women's domestic chores interfere with taking on new roles is not questioned. Triestinos, however, may not appreciate factors which complicate the lives of San Diego women. Living in a very compact city, they may not realize the implications of living in a geographically dispersed city. San Diegans often drive long distances in opposing directions to reach specific stores or activities. And, while American husbands may demand less of their wives than Italians, American children appear to require more of parents' time in chauffeuring and in activities such

as Little League, Scouts, music lessons. These demands do not necessarily come at times convenient to the parent.

The belief that finding child care is a greater problem for Italian women than Americans is another Italian belief which is not clearly supported, in Trieste at least. While neither country meets the demand for child care, the Italian, largely public, system more completely covers the care of three to six year olds. The American mixture of public, private and family (women taking other children into their homes) child care, appears to better meet the needs of mothers with children under three. (Saraceno, 1984) While American children are in school until about 3 p.m., Italian children come home at 12:30. Full time schools --five full days and no Saturday classes-- and after school programs are being introduced, but they are in a minority of schools. Women in Trieste do not exchange child care as readily as Americans. On the other hand, the lack of children in stores compared to California and the frequency with which children are seen in parks with grandparents suggests that extra-familial child care is not a necessity for many families. Indeed, since Trieste has little in-migration, families with young children are far more likely to have relatives locally than is true in highly mobile Southern California. Further, as public opinion polls demonstrate, older Italian women have a more traditional view of gender roles than women in the U.S. They are undoubtedly more predisposed to care for grandchildren than grandmothers in California, many of whom are working themselves or are too involved in activities to take regular responsibility for care of grandchildren.

Attitudes about Women's Roles. Opinion polls further demonstrate the degree of Italian women's committment to their domestic roles. Family commitment was the most common explantion for women having fewer rights than men in a 1978 Gallup poll. In another study, over 80% of women said they remained housewives because taking care of husband and taking care of the house gives enough work. More significantly, 77% remained housewives because they like housework and over half because the true place for a woman is the home (Calvaruso, 23). Avanzini and Lanzetti likewise found women slightly more likely than men to feel women's place is in the home, that women's employment hurts a couple, that if a woman must work it should be part-time, that girls

must learn to sacrifice for others and that education is more important for boys than girls. While women themselves indicate a strong commitment to domestic roles, men clearly expect women to maintain that traditional level of commitment. In a 1985 poll only 21% of Italian males wanted a "dynamic and enterprising woman," and 6% wanted a career-oriented woman. (Suro) Italy is one of the European countries in which men are distinctly less favorable than women toward equality of roles. (Commission of the European Communities:9, 27)

Italian women's traditional attitudes are changing; younger women's opinions are more like those of American women, and public opinion polls also show that women are interested in changing women's roles. For example, 79% of Italian women would like to work and 79% think most women want change (Gallup: 360).

Public opinion polls in the U.S. generally indicate a higher level of support for women working outside the home than in Italy. Men and women believe that, ideally, both husband and wife should work and share household responsibilities (63%,) , that it is alright for married women to work even if their husbands can support them (74%), and that there is no reason why women with young children shouldn't work(84%). Yet, as in Italy, contradictory opinions can be found. For example, 76% agreed that women with young children should not work unless financially necessary.(All from Public Opinion)

A poll taken in Italy and the United States summarizes the difference in women's feelings about their lives in these two countries and suggests, as have observers, that feelings exist which may lead more Italian women to change their life situation. Americans indicated a higher level of satisfaction with their lives than Italians on all questions. Italian women's level of satisfaction was closest to the Americans' with respect to family relationships;71% of Italians were satisfied with family relations compared to 78% of Americans. The greatest difference in level of satisfaction concerned "social significance my job or pride in my life" (14 % of Italians vs. 56 % of Americans). Americans were twice as likely (25 vs.
49 %) to be satisfied with "preparation for future life" and with "chance to use my abilities."(Index to International Public Opinion: 639).

Italian women's strong family commitment and low rate of extra-familial participation undoubtedly discourage women who might consider expanding their roles through education. Without successful role models it is easy to believe that middle-aged women are incapable of success in advanced intellectual pursuits. And not knowing mature women in school could intimidate women who fear pressure from going against norms and fear isolation from more traditional friends and younger students. Research on American re-entry women in the 1960s and early 1970s, when returning to college was less common, reveal considerable anxiety about academic failure and social isolation. Research on re-entry American women in the 1980s when most women work outside the home and mature women successfully completing their education are common on campuses show much less anxiety about failure and isolation. (Cottrell and Pommerenke)

Feminism. The women's movement in both countries has encouraged redefinition of women's roles. As seen above, American women, less domestically bound to begin with, have more readily expanded their roles. The public image of feminism in the two countries contributes to this different rates of change among middle class women over 30. American feminism, although seen as radical by many, has not identified with a particular political party. In Italy the most active feminist organization, *Unione Donne Italiane*, was initially an organization of the Communist Party. Many middle class women were reluctant to be identified as feminist or to behave in a way considered "feminist", including challenging traditional gender roles, because some equate it with Communists.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

In both countries two incomes are increasingly necessary to maintain a family's standard of living. While this might encourage women in both countries to seek more education, other economic factors contribute to the lower rate of Italian women returning to school after 30. As shown above, Italian women are less likely to be self-supporting. Further, many judges in American divorce cases award divorcees alimony for three years, time to get an education to become self-supporting. This provides a strong incentive to return to school immediately.

University students in both countries faced difficulties obtaining employment after graduation in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but the problem was far greater for Italian graduates. (Barbagli, Burn, De Carlo, DeFrancesco and Trivelatto, Fontana, Liquori and Veneziano, and Wuliger comment on this.) This discouraging reality is compounded in Italy by the fact that a much higher proportion of jobs are in the public sector than in the U.S. and all applicants for such jobs must pass a *concorso pubblico*, similar to a civil service exam.[4] The fact that first-time job seekers may not take this exam after age 35 (later for advancement) undoubtedly discourages many adults from studying in their early 30s to prepare for a career if their education might extend beyond the exam's age limit.

Further, Italians are generally reluctant to take risks, especially in economic life. Since "jobs in every field were few until recently...those most sought after are still very rare" (Barzini:108) Italians seeking stability are more likely than Americans to consider their first job a job for life. Lack of career opportunities and the value placed on stability (*sistemazione*) discussed by Barzini have created a norm of not changing jobs. For example, an Italian teacher who had secured a preferred new job reported very negative responses from friends when she changed positions. This commitment to one's first adult career and unwillingness to risk new ventures seems to apply to the career of housewife/mother as well as to paid positions.

ORGANIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The organization of higher education itself influences enrollment rates for mature students. Higher education in Italy and the U.S. differ on a number of factors which affect adults' decisions to continue their studies or not. In most respects the American system makes it easier for the returning student than the Italian system.

Extent of Compulsory Education. The fact that Italian compulsory education extends only through lower secondary school is likely to impose a psychological barrier to many adults wishing to resume studies at the higher secondary level. Although higher secondary school is not compulsory

4 Two-thirds of university graduates were employed in public administration in the early 1970s, 14% in industry. (Burn:12)

and is more the equivalent of American community colleges than high school, it is secondary education and is seen as appropriately occurring prior to adulthood. The degree awarded for higher secondary school, *maturita*, signifies maturity. It is undoubtedly more difficult to return to secondary school with teen age students than to higher education, appropriately a pursuit for mature individuals.

Diversity of Institutions. The diversity of American institutions of higher education offers a choice of ways to resume studies. Entrance requirements for colleges and universities vary considerably. Thus, in San Diego an individual who does not qualify for university admission can begin at a community college which has no entrance requirements for adults and, if successful, progress to the university. Extension and correspondance courses also permit a less threatening return, and serve those far from a university campus.

Non-traditional students in Italy are hindered by lack of alternatives to the university for higher education. There are few institutions such as American community colleges, Australian Colleges of Advanced Education or British Polytechnic colleges, not to mention universities specifically designed to meet the needs of older/working students such as National University in San Diego, or altenatives such as Open University in Britain, American Universities without walls or correspondance courses. (Burn, De Francesco and Trivellato, Liquori and Veneziano, Martinotti and Moscati, Pignatelli, Zanetta) In Italy entrance requirements for university and university level professional schools, completion of a five year higher secondary degree, are uniform throughout the country.

Levels of Degree Offered. Older students are more numerous at American universities than Italian partly because degrees are offered at several levels. In addition to students who begin higher education after an interruption, others who completed their A.A. (2 year degree) or B.A (4 year degree) at the appropriate age continue or return for the more advanced M.A. or professional degrees, e.g., medicine or law, or the still more advanced Ph.D. In California, teaching credentials also require post-baccalaureate course work. Italian universities, in contrast, offered only one

degree, the *laurea*, in the early 1980s.[5] Some students, especially graduates in medicine, return to university for specialized courses, and others take degrees in second fields, but this is far less common than pursuing graduate studies in the U.S.

Cost. To the extent that cost deters returning students, this is more likely to be a consideration in the U.S. than in Italy, although it varies with institution. U.S. community colleges are nearly free, while tuition at colleges/universities varies and may be very high. Italian universities cost very little. University level colleges and higher secondary schools are sometimes private and quite expensive, though many have stipends for students.

Class Attendance. Once an individual has decided to resume studies, expectations regarding on-campus involvement can be crucial to whether s/he continues or not. University students in both countries are free to determine the number of courses taken at one time. Italian norms regarding university class attendance, however, make it easier for Italians to combine studies with other roles. The norm in most faculties is to enroll for a class and take the final exam without attending lectures; in 1970 only one-fifth of university students attended lectures regularly. (Burn:18) American university students have less freedom; class attendance, usually three hours a week, is expected. Italian students at the university level colleges have the least flexibility, for they are expected to attend class full-time, typically 30 hours a week including practicum.

Hours for classes and Services. The ease with which adult students combine roles also depends on the hours classes and university services are available. American colleges and universities offer greater flexibility, although they do not fully meet the needs of students unable to follow an 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. schedule. A comparison of Trieste and San Diego State Universities illustrates the differences. The majority of SDSU classes meet between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., though 17% meet earlier or later. Additional courses are offered on weekends and during summer and winter holidays. The library, open 7:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. weekdays is also open weekends. University

---

5 In 1983 a new degree, *Dottorato di Ricerca* was introduced.

offices are less accomodating and are not open evening hours, though some services such as the advising center and bookstore are open until 6 or 7 p.m. on some days.

At Trieste University in 1984, over half the classes (53%) met between 8 a.m. and noon. The importance of the midday dinner break is seen in the fact that less than one percent of classes met at 1 p.m. and only four percent at 2 p.m. Eleven percent met at 6 or 7 p.m. which precedes supper, but, for many working Italians, is during working hours. Two percent of classes met Saturday mornings. There is no tradition of summer classes at Trieste University. Pignatelli's concern about the limited availability of courses for working students and unsuccessful requests of working students for genuinely evening classes, indicate that this problem exists throughout Italy. (Pignatelli; 121-2) The more limited hours Italian university libraries are open further complicates studies for the working or older student. Italian university libraries are decentralized. At Trieste University the central library is open mornings and afternoons (closed midday), but the many smaller libraries with books unavailable elsewhere are open only a few hours on week days, usually in the morning.

Recruitment and Support. The most important institutional difference explaining the greater participation of re-entry women in American higher education is undoubtedly the encouragement and support many American universities have given re-entry women. These efforts began in the 1960s. Recruitment efforts intensified in the 1970s, as higher education enrollments levelled and institutions anticipated a declining population of 18-24 year olds

To encourage the enrollment and retention of older students American universities and colleges have made a few institutional changes. Many have expanded advising and counseling centers to serve needs of non-traditional students and have extended the hours classes and some services are offered. Child care/preschool programs have also been introduced. By 1971 one-fourth of U.S. four year colleges operated some program for children of students, faculty and staff (Greenblet and Eberhard:6). Each of the 19 campuses in the California State University system, of which SDSU is a part, has at least one child care program and some offer evening child care.

Entirely new institutions such as San Diego's National University have appeared and are organized primarily to meet the needs of non-traditional students. At the national and state level, there are also networks supporting and encouraging the older student, for example, the Women's Re-entry Consortium and California Advocates for Re-entry Education (CARE).

Italian universities have neither recruited nor developed support systems to encourage re-entry students, largely because they have no vested interest in doing so. Italian universities in the 1970s were struggling to accomodate an exploding enrollment. The combination of more students finishing higher secondary school, a greater proportion of those going to university, high unemployment among young people, and the liberalization of access to university faculties coupled with the fact that Italian universities have no selection process for limiting enrollment, led to a 53% increase in university enrollment of 18-24 year olds between 1970 and 1977. (See Burn, Dei and Rossi, Hechinger, Sartori) Enrollment at University of Bologna, for example, increased from 20,000 to 60,000 with virtually no additional professors and University of Rome has 150,000 students on a campus built for 20,000 (Hechinger).

Italian universities have no tradition of student services such as advising and counseling centers, but more importantly, they have had no motivation to develop services for the non-traditional student. Trieste University has no counseling or advising centers and no child care facility. (Rome University did have a child care center for staff, but it was not open to students or faculty). Italian scholars have commented that the centralized and very traditional university system has been unable or unwilling to cope with the increasing numbers of students, let alone the needs of non-traditional students (Burn, De Francesco and Trivellato, Liquori and Veneziano, Martinotti and Moscati, Pignatelli, Zanetta) Balbo and Erges do credit the university with some adjustments in response to the demands of the workers' movement, but, although universities have permitted some courses and research on women's issues, they have not responded to the women's movement with the same commitment they did to the earlier workers' movement (Balbo and Erges, 17). Balbo and Erges noted a high drop out rate of women in "100 Hours" courses which convinced them "that special arrangements had to be made for women, e.g., more flexible hours or

child care for Saturday classes" if older women are to be encouraged to return to university.(1982:763)

COMPARISON OF MATURE FEMALE STUDENTS IN TRIESTE AND SAN DIEGO

Contrary to the general consensus among Italians that Italian women over 30 rarely pursue post-compulsory education, such women are studying at universities, colleges, and even at higher secondary schools. The research reported here compares mid-life women who are studying for advanced diplomas or degrees in Trieste and San Diego. These women do not represent extremes of cultural diversity since both countries are Western, industrial nations sharing the same cultural heritage. Both countries have faced challenges to culture and institutions posed by the women's movement. Nevertheless, there are differences between Italy and the U.S., described above, which affect women and students. This research, then, asks the following questions about women in Trieste and San Diego who have returned to studies after age 30: 1) do different kinds of women continue their education at this age, 2) are their motivations the same, and 3) do they encounter different degrees and kinds of problems in pursuing their education?

The above comparisons do not permit formulation of specific hypotheses. But they do provide background which suggests some anticipated differences between mature female students in Italy and the U.S. In some cases, however, the background comparisons make possible contradictory expectations. For example, the strong familial ties suggest that returning Italian women are more likely to be single or without children. But the larger number of single and self-supporting American women combined with greater economic opportunity suggests that returning American women are more likely to be single. These factors also suggest that the Americans will have stronger economic motives for studying.

Cultural differences also provide contradictory expectations regarding problems experienced by returning women in these two countries. Institutional patterns--economic and educational--indicate greater logistical difficulties for Italians, yet the university norm of non-attendance and

greater availability of extended family in Trieste could counteract the problems for Italians. The more traditional attitudes of women over 30, lack of role models and other mature women on campus suggest that Italian women are more likely to experience insecurity about their abilities and relationships if they do pursue studies.

DESCRIPTION OF INSTITUTIONS AND SAMPLES

All 251 women in the American sample were students at San Diego State University, an urban university with about 33,000 students. Fifty-one percent were undergraduates seeking a bachelor's degree, and 49% were graduate students working for a Master's degree or teaching credential.

The 49 Italian respondents were studying in a greater variety of institutions. Over half (52%) were seeking a *laurea* at the university which had about 17,000 students. An additional 10% were in specialized post-graduate courses, primarily in medical fields. (Medicine is not a post-graduate degree in Italy.) Thirty-five percent were enrolled in programs leading to a higher secondary diploma; 40% of these were nurses studying for reclassification.

The two samples did not differ significantly in familial status. Over 60% were married and had children at home. The Italians were more likely to have an only child and their youngest was more likely to be either an infant or teen ager. While over two-thirds in each sample were employed, the Italians were somewhat more likely to be working and were significantly more likely to work 30 or more hours a week.

The Italian sample was also significantly older than the American; the mean age was 45 compared to 37. The age distribution of university undergraduates in these samples was the same so the overall age difference is due to the fact that American graduate students were younger and the Italian secondary level students older. The latter had especially long interruptions before returning to school; eighty-three percent of this group were over 30 when they enrolled in their present program.

Table 3: CHARACTERISTICS OF SAMPLES: Percentage Distribution(a) (a)

CHARACTERISTIC	ITALIAN			AMERICAN		
	Pre-univ (N=18)	Univ. level (N=31)	All (N=49)	Under-level (N=128)	Grad- (N=123)	All (N=251)
AGE *						
30-35	33	42	39	44	58	52
36-40	22	29	26	27	14	21
41+	44	29	35	29	24	27
AGE YOUNGEST CHILD AT HOME **						
None at home	39	36	37	39	41	40
Under 5	9	35	26	16	17	16
6-10	11	16	14	20	21	21
11 +	44	26	33	25	21	23
HOURS/WEEK WORKING ***						
0	20	19	19	35	31	34
1-19	0	8	5	16	27	16
20-39	67	55	58	23	23	23
40 +	14	19	17	27	29	28
CLASS HOURS/ WEEK ***						
None	11	43	31	6	11	9
1-6	0	13	8	32	45	38
7-12	6	7	6	39	30	35
13 plus	83	37	54	23	13	18

(a) Percent of those responding to each question
*Chi square for Italian total compared to American total is less than .05. ** Chi square is less than .01.
***Chi is less than .001

The Italian and American samples also differed significantly on class attendance. While three-quarters of the Americans attended class 1-12 hours a week, the Italian women clustered at the two extremes. Half of the Italians, 83% of the secondary students, attended more than 13 hours a week and a third, 43% of the university level students, attended no classes. These extremes reflect the norms discussed above, that class attendance is not expected in university, but full time enrollment and attendance is expected in many of the higher secondary programs.

MOTIVES FOR RETURNING

Careers motivated the majority of respondents in both countries to continue their studies; about sixty percent in each country said career preparation and change/advancement were either important or very important motives.[6] Half in each country said changing or advancing careers was a very important reason for studying and nearly that many Americans said the same of career preparation. Only a small proportion of Italians, however, said career preparation was very important. Four explanations suggest themselves. First, more of the Italians were already working full or nearly full time. Second, Italian women were probably less confident about getting a job in the early 1980s. Third, older women in Italy seeking a first job in the public sector face an age limit on taking the *concorso pubblico*. A fourth reason preparing for a career ranked higher among Americans may be related to the high American divorce rate coupled with the limited alimony awards. Not surprisingly, in both countries, women seeking the lower degree (pre-university and undergraduate) placed more emphasis on career preparation and those at the higher level on changing/advancing careers.

The striking finding of this research is not that career was an important motivator, but that this was not the most important motivation in either country. Non-instrumental motives, "learning new things/ getting an education" and "personal satisfaction" ranked higher. Over 75% of Americans and over 90% of Italians considered these important or very important motives. The Italians' emphasis on these non-instrumental motivations is further indicated by the large majority who said these were very important reasons for studying. (At the very important level Americans did put career motives ahead of learning and satisfaction.)

---

6 This analysis compares proportion of respondants who indicated that a motive had any importance, i.e., all those who did not say "not important." The American questionnaire asked for a ranking; the Italian asked repondants to indicate whether a motive was of great, some, or no importance. For comparison an American ranking of eone or two is equated to "very important," a three or four to "somewhat important," and a five or six to "not important."

Table 4: MOTIVES FOR RETURNING TO/CONTINUING EDUCATION: Percentage Distribution (a)

MOTIVATION	ITALIAN			AMERICAN		
	Pre-Univ. (N=18)	Univ. level (N=31)	All (N=49)	Under-grads (N=128)	Grad students (N=123)	All (N=251
LEARN NEW THINGS/ EDUCUCATION ***						
Very impt.	91	91	91	45	44	44
Important	0	0	0	38	40	39
Not impt.	9	9	9	18	16	17
PERSONAL SATISFACTION ***						
Very impt	79	81	80	36	34	35
Important	7	19	16	36	46	41
Not impt	14	0	4	28	21	24
IMPROVED SELF IMAGE ***						
Very impt	64	62	63	12	12	12
Important	21	21	21	43	46	45
Not impt	14	17	16	45	41	43
CAREER PREPARATION ***						
Very important	8	18	13	45	40	43
Important	54	37	42	19	16	18
Not important	38	44	42	35	43	39
ADVANCE/CHANGE CAREER						
Very impt	36	56	50	46	40	48
Important	18	15	16	8	17	10
Not important	46	30	34	45	37	42

(a) Percent of those responding

*** Chi square for Italian total compared to American total is less than .001

It is possible that "learning new things" could be an instrumental motive reflecting the need to learn new things for occupational success. If this were the case, the responses on career preparation or advancement should be more similar to "learning new things." However, only half the Italian respondents rated one or both career motives as either somewhat or very important compared to 90% who said learning new things was very important. A more detailed look at the Italian data confirms the greater importance of expressive over instrumental motives for

continuing education past 30.[7] Ninety percent of the Italian respondents said that either "learning new things", "personal satisfaction" or both were very important motives for being in school. (The fact that slightly over half said both were very important suggests that learning new things does give personal satisfaction.) Only half, in contrast, identified one or both career motivations as very important, and 12% said neither career preparation nor advancing/changing career had any importance to them. More than half of the latter were studying foreign language or philosophy at the university.

Improving self image, the third most important motive for the Italian women, was last on the Americans' list. This is probably because the status and image of middle-aged Italian women has not changed as much as that of Americans.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

Italians in Trieste argued that women over 30 were unlikely to pursue formal education, saying "it is more difficult than it would be in America." Contrary to the Italian view that returning to school is more difficult for Italians than Americans, these two studies indicate that the American women, not the Italians, were most likely to perceive problems in continuing their education after age 30. Respondents rated each of 20 problems as a great problem, minor problem, or no problem for them. Questions regarding problems are grouped into broad issues: institutional, personal, logistic, financial, and relationships on campus and at home. For American students logistical problems were, overall, the greatest concern; Italians were more concerned with personal shortcomings.

Role Conflicts

Given the emphasis in American and Italian literature on women's difficulties juggling private and public roles, it is not surprising that Americans most commonly cited logistical problems. The Italians, believed to face greater logistical problems, especially combining domestic and extra-familial roles, were far less likely to report problems in managing their lives.

---

7 Comparable breakdown of data is unavailable for the American sample.

The problem affecting by far the greatest percent of Americans (81%), was combining studies with home and family. This is precisely the problem that conversations with Italians would lead one to predict most serious among Italians. Yet, significantly fewer Italians (51%) reported this as a problem. Combining employment and studies was a problem for over two-thirds of the Americans, compared to less than one-third of the Italians, in spite of the fact that Italians worked longer hours. Both samples reported difficulties with times classes meet (68% of Americans and 58% of Italians), but, contrary to the emphasis in the American literature on child care problems, this was not perceived as an issue by many in either country-- only 25%. The greater perception of role conflicts among Americans is even more striking when only the "major problem" responses are compared. Fifty three percent of Americans compared to ten percent of Italians said that combining home and studies was a major problem. Fifty-four percent of Americans compared to 15% of Italians gave the same assessment of combining work and studies.

The relative lack of difficulty Italian women experienced combining studies with other roles reflects the fact that nearly one-third did not attend classes. Conflict between studies and employment was especially low for Italian university students because 60% of them attended class six hours or less a week, compared with 38% of Americans. While Italian pre-university students were twice as likely to find this a problem as university students, they were still far less troubled than Americans. The large percent of pre-university students in the nursing program in which studies were part of work time would reduce the perceived conflict between work and studies for that group.

The great difference in perceived difficulty combining family and student roles supports the contention that women in Trieste may have help from extended kin. It is also possible that the greater difficulty of adding new activities to the demanding domestic role discourages many Italian women and therefore those who do enroll represent a more select sample of women than American women in higher education. The more encompassing wording on the American questionnaire-- combining studies with home and family-- rather than combining studies and work at home, which could be interpreted as not including obligations of wife and mother roles, undoubtedly

Table 5: PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS INDICATING SPECIFIC ISSUE IS A PROBLEM (a,b)

PROBLEM	ITALIAN			AMERICAN		
	pre-univ (N=18)	univ. level (N=31)	All (N=49)	under-grad (N=128)	grad-level (N=123)	All (N=25
ROLE CONFLICTS						
Combine Studies and Home/family***	50	52	51	82	81	81
Combine Employment andstudies***	44	21	29	69	74	71
Finding Child Care	22	30	27	25	25	25
INADEQUATE ACADEMIC PREPARATION						
Outdated Study Skills***	73	55	61	45	24	35
Inadequate Academic Prep.**	56	46	50	39	20	30
INSTITUTIONAL INADEQUACIES						
Inconvenient Class Times	47	63	58	74	62	68
Course Information	43	53	50	69	57	63
Career Information***	40	27	32	75	60	68
FINANCIAL PROBLEMS						
Financial Problems/Stress	43	40	41	54	46	50
RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS						
Feeling Isolation	33	26	28	34	24	29
Lack Contact with other Mature Students***	19	23	21	66	52	59
Friends Disapprove	14	11	12	--	--	--
No Encouragement from Non-student friends	--	--	--	32	27	29
Lack Acceptance by Younger Students	25	19	21	24	13	18
Professors' Negative attitude/-Lack Acceptance	18	10	12	31	19	25
Husbband Disapproves	31	18	23	--	--	--
Husband Does Not Encourage	--	--	--	23	24	24

a) all figures are percents of the entire sample whether the question applies to them or not.
b) Percent of respondents who answered "major problem" or "somewhat of a problem"
Chi squares are for American total compared to Italian total. *Chi square less than .05 ** Chi square less than .01 *** Chi square less than .001

contributes to the different levels of response. Even if the Italians included these, the pattern would probably not change since Italian mothers do not appear to devote as many hours to children's organizational activities as American mothers.

As indicated, child care was not a major concern; only about one-quarter in both samples saw this as a problem area (40% of those with children). Since this is close to the proportion who had children between one and nine , ages when child care is most crucial, this does not so much suggest that child care is not problematic for those with young children, as that most women over 30 don't have to face the problem. Having delayed their return to school, more than half the women in both samples had no children under 15.

Inadequate Academic Preparation

The general area of greatest concern for Italians was inadequate academic preparation. Outdated study skills were considered a problem by 61% and inadequate academic preparation by half. In contrast, only about one-third of the Americans shared these concerns. This finding casts doubt on the widely discussed "fear of failure", among American re-entry students. While both higher secondary and university level Italians were more concerned about these inadequacies than either group of Americans, in both countries women at the lower educational level were the most concerned.

Especially notable are the Italian women in higher secondary programs; 73% thought study skills a problem and 66% felt the same about academic preparation. This is undoubtedly because nearly 60% of this group had finished only lower secondary school. Since the Italian system has been one of separating the elite into pre-university programs, their educational background is more likely to prove a psychological barrier to continuing than having completed only compulsory schooling in the U.S would be. Another reason, particularly relevant to concern with loss of study skills among the pre-university Italian women, is the fact that over half were 35 or older when they entered their current program, compared to 21% of Italian university level women and about 30% of the Americans.

Further, as Italians who have studied in both countries argue, there is more to fear in Italian higher education, including higher secondary school. It is more difficult, there are no "fun" electives, the course material is thought to be harder and exams are oral comprehensive exams covering a year's work.

Institutional Inadequacies.

About two-thirds of the Americans said that inconvenient class hours, inadequate information regarding courses and inadequate career advising were problems. While inconvenient class hours was the second most frequently cited problem among Italians, as among Americans, it was an issue for only a little over half (56%) and Italians were far less concerned about lack of course or career information.

It is not surprising that lack of course information was of greater concern to Americans. Graduation requirements at an American university can be confusing, with numerous courses needed to fill diverse requirements, e.g., general education, the major , the minor, American institutions. It is not always clear where one goes for advice, and when one knows where to go, it may not be open at convenient hours

The concept of academic advising is not familiar to Italians. Courses required for the *maturita* are established by law. At the post-secondary level studies are concentrated in a single discipline, and, since graduation requirements involve that area only, less help is needed in assuring the correct selection of courses.[8] The nearly half of Italian respondents who said lack of information regarding courses was problematic may have been referring to a particular course's requirements rather than selection of courses.

Americans were twice as likely as Italians to be concerned about inadequate career information. This, too, may be due to the narrower focus of Italian studies both at the higher secondary level and

8 Single disciplines at the university are defined more broadly than the American counterparts. The 12 required exams (courses) in the Italian sociology degree program include history of philosophy, moral philosophy, history, cultural anthropology, logic and psychology, in addition to courses which would be included in an American sociology curriculum.

at university. Since Italians must enroll in a particular course of study from the beginning, it is possible that Italians' career goals, if career is a factor, are defined more clearly before entering the university. The broader education at American universities may make career choice less apparent, and therefore the need for counseling more apparent. However, since the American graduate students who have also chosen a single field of study expressed greater concern with lack of career information than the Italians, the difference in level of concern may be primarily one of expectations. The Americans expect to gain career information and advise at university. The Italians may not expect this kind of direction and clarification from the institution.

Financial Problems

A frequently discussed source of strain, for college/university students of any age in the United States is finances. San Diego State is a state university and costs relatively little to attend, $400 to $600 per year, depending on number of courses taken. This is higher than Italian universities' tuition of about $200 per year. This, along with the Italian respondents' higher level of employment, may account for the greater perceived financial strain on the part of Americans. With more than half saying they had inadequate money for college, and half saying lack of income was a problem, this issue ranked fairly high among the Americans. Only 39% of Italians reported financial problems.

Relationships

Going to school/university after 30, one enters a world designed for, and still dominated by younger people. The older student often feels marginal in that situation. In addition, the fact of moving into a new (and in the minds of many, inappropriate) role often isolates her from friends of her own age and may even threaten family relations. Since older women pursuing an education is less common in Italy than the U.S., a greater feeling of isolation was anticipated among Italians. In fact, general feeling of isolation was not a problem for most; less than one-third in each sample felt it to be so.

Regarding relationships on campus, the biggest difference between Italians and Americans is the high level of American concern about lack of contact with other older students (60% vs. 23%

of Italians). This may reflect different patterns of participation and expectation more than the number of other mature students. Once again, the fact that nearly half the Italian university students did not attend classes (and nearly half of those in pre-university programs were nurses upgrading professional qualifications with others in the same situation, if not over 30) is likely to be a major explanatory factor. A larger proportion of Italian mature female students were not in a situation to miss the company of other mature students. In addition, American universities have traditionally been perceived as centers of social activity, as well as learning, to a far greater extent than Italian universities. This aura may affect the mature female who would like to have some social interaction with others like herself, and expects to find it on campus. Further, as this report makes clear, the Americans perceived themselves as experiencing more problems than the Italians. Seeing themselves in this light they probably felt a greater need to meet others sharing their problems.

Other aspects of on-campus relationships are those with professors and younger students. Most women in both samples had no problem relating to either younger students or professors, although Americans were more likely to report problems with lack of acceptance by professors (25% vs. 12%) The somewhat less negative attitude of professors in Italy may be due to the more elite and intellectual character of European universities traditionally. Women who attended universities were serious students and were discouraged from showing their femininity. Among American female students social activities and feminine charm have been as important in the more social atmosphere of the American campus as demonstrating intellectual prowess. Thus, American professors have not seen women as serious students since even the bright ones have not been forced to conform as strictly to the male intellectual model. Although the anticipated difference between Italians' and Americans' feeling of isolation from younger students was not found, in both countries women in classes with younger students, Italian pre-university students and American undergraduates, felt greater isolation than the more advanced students.

American women were also more likely to report strain with non-student friends than the Italians (35 vs. 11%). Again, the norm that Americans attend classes may have made it more

difficult to maintain friendships off campus, as many reported was the case. (The more negative wording on the Italian questionnaire..."disapproval of friends" compared to "strained relations with" or "lack of encouragement from" friends on the American questionnaire may also contribute to rating differences.) [9]

Contrary to what Italians' observations lead one to expect, familial relationships were also considered more problematic by American respondents than Italians; 44% reported strain with their husbands. Returning to school for some was probably a response to that strain, a desire to prepare for the possibility of future self sufficiency, rather than the cause of the strain. One-quarter of Italians reported husbands' disapproval; the same proportion of Americans reported lack of encouragement from husbands. If Italian husbands are, as Italians argued, less supportive of wives' returning to school than American men, then the relatively lower involvement of older Italian women in education may itself reflect a greater perception that going to school would endanger family relationships. The relatively low perception of husbands' disapproval may reflect extreme disapproval keeping many women from pursuing their own advancement as much as lack of approval from husbands. This cannot be known without further research. The third of Americans who reported strained relationships with children probably reflects lack of time for children's interests rather than disapproval.

SUMMARY

Italian women over 30 are less likely to be pursuing post-compulsory education degrees than their American counterparts. If women who have not completed higher secondary school in Italy are included among potential female re-entry students this difference is not explained by the

---

9 The difference in the wording of questions regarding relationships on the two questionnaires reflects one of the problems of comparative research. The shift in wording from strain/lack of support to disapproval on the Italian instrument occurred in the process of translation by an Italian woman and subsequent revision by a female Italian sociologist. It is likely that this shift reflects a difference in cultural perceptions regarding relations and strain. In comparative research using the same term does not guarantee equivalent meaning. This is illustrated by the question on need for advice on courses which the Italian women answered. It is not clear what they were really answering since mention of academic advising to Italian professors drew a quizzical response.

number of women eligible to resume post-compulsory education. The reasons are found in larger cultural differences, especially the more traditional role expectations for Italian women over 30. Women themselves are bound by more traditional gender role attitudes, but Italian husbands' expectations certainly contribute to their wives' behavior. Higher standards, fewer technological aids, and less flexible institutional arrangements mean Italian women's domestic chores are generally more time consuming, although women in Trieste are more likely to be able to count on help from extended kin than are women in California.

The more domestic orientation of middle-age Italian women means there are fewer models for women in public roles to encourage and give confidence to others. Women over 30 in Trieste in the early 1980s are much like American women in the early 1960s. Among Italian women generally, commitment to extra-familial roles is still the exception. Since the early 1960s middle-age American women have moved in great numbers into public roles, including into universities and colleges. Returning to school is now regarded as normal and examples of successful re-entry women abound. Not only is it accepted for American women to move on to new pursuits, many feel it is expected.

The emphasis on women's maintaining their traditional and revered position as the mainstay of family life reflects, in part, the importance of stability in Italian life. This value, encouraged by an uncertain economy has made Italians less willing to take risks than individualistic, change oriented Americans. Returning to school at mid-life can be seen as risky.

Economic factors contribute to the different rate of participation in formal education among Italian and American women. American women are more likely to be self supporting or expecting to support themselves. And the generally stronger American economy plus the the lack of an age limit on civil service exam increases the chance that an American's mid-life education will pay off in a job than would an Italian's.

The highly centralized and less flexible Italian educational system is also less encouraging to older students, especially women. There are fewer options in Italy for returning to higher education and Italian universities, trying to accomodate exploding enrollments, have not recruited

non-traditional students as have American universities. Lack of support services for non-traditional students reflects the lack of motivation to recruit such students but also reflects the difference in tradition of student support in American and Italian universities. Further, the earlier age limit for compulsory education in Italy means that many who wish to return to school may need to resume secondary education which would be psychologically more difficult than returning to higher education. Training for popular women's careers (nursing, elementary teaching) takes place at secondary level.

The studies of mature female students in Trieste and San Diego reveal little difference in type of woman who returns. While most in both studies were motivated by career concerns, non-instumental motives were even more important, especially for the Italians. Although the more tradtional gender orientation of Italian women, complexity of carrying out domestic chores and characteristics of the Italian system suggested that Italian women would experience more problems on returning to school, the American women reported the greatest difficulties. Role conflicts were eased for the women in Trieste by greater probability ofsupport from extended kin and lack of pressure to attend classes. Some of the problems reported by Americans reflect different expectations more than different experiences. For example, Americans reported lack of advice and lack of contact with other mature students as problems to a greater degree than Italians. Italian women have no expectation of advice at the university, university is not seen as a place for social contacts, and most of the Italian university students spent little or no time on campus.

It is likely that the greater of traditional roles for Italian women means those women who returned to school after 30 were a more select group, representing women who have support. The greater perception of problems among American re-entry women may reflect the broader spectrum of women returning to school, a willingness to try in the face of greater odds and less support.

This question can only be answered with further research. The present research is clearly a first step rather than a definitive statement comparing older female students in Italy and the U.S. More qualitative information is needed to ascertain the degree to which questions have the same

meaning in both contexts. More importantly, information regarding women who choose not to resume or continue their education past 30 is necessary to fully appreciate the difficulty women face in considering or pursuing an education after 30 in both countries.

REFERENCES

ANTONIOTTI, F., P. ARBARELLO, C. COLOMBA and M. CATALUCCI (1977) *Donna Oggi in Italia* (Roma: Casa Ed. La Cultura).

AVANZINI, B.B. and C. LANZETTI (Eds) (1980) *Problemi e modelli di vita familiare* (Milano, Vita e Pensiero).

BALBO, LAURA (1981) Women's Access to Intellectual Work: The Case of Italy, *Signs*, 6, pp. 763-9.

BALBO, LAURA (1982) i temi della condizione della donna, un esperienza nell'universita di massa, in G. MARTINOTTI & R. MOSCATI (Eds) *Lavorare Nella Universita Oggi* (Milan, Franco Angeli Editore).

BALBO, LAURA and YASMINE ERGAS (1982) *Women's Studies in Italy* (Old Westbury, N.Y., The Feminist Press).

BARBAGLI, MARZIO (1974) *Disoccupazione intellettuale e sistema scolastico in Italia* (Bologna, Il Mulino).

BARZINI, LUIGI (1967) *The Italians* (New York, Atheneum).

BERTIN, GIOVANNI MARIA (1976) *L'educazione al Cambiemento* (Firenze, La Nuova Italia).

BOILEAU, A.M. and ANDREA MORETTI (1980) *Madri e figlie degli anni 80: La realta della donna in Friuli* (Udine, Editrice Grillo).

BRUNO, SERGIO (1974) Dinamica di una espansione, in P. BISOGNO et al (Eds) *Universita, diagnosi e terapia* (Roma, Officina Edizioni).

BURN, BARBARA (1974) Il sistema emergente di educazione superiore in Italia in P. BISOGNO et al (Eds) *Universita diagnosi e terapia* (Roma, Officina Edizioni).

CALVARUSO, CLAUDIO (1982) Occupazione femminile e crisi del welfare state, *Donna e Societa*, 63, pp. 15-23.

CATELLI, G. and F. BONAZZI (1975) L'emarginazione femminile: mercato del lavoro e qualificazione professionale, *Scuola e Professione*, 2, pp. 141-57.

CINI, MARCELLO, GIANNI BATTIMELLI, ANTONELLA CARFORA & FERDINANDO FIORELLI (1982) I Seminari delle 150 Ore all'Universita di Roma, in: GUIDO MARTINOTTI & R. MOSCATI (Eds) *Lavorare Nella Universita Oggi* (Milan, Franco Angeli Editore).

CLARK, BURTON (1983) *The Higher Education System: Academic Organization in Cross-National Perspective* (Berkeley, University of California Press).

CLARK, BURTON (1977) *Academic Power in Italy: Bureaucracy and Oligarchy in a National University System* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press).

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (1984) *Women and Men of*

Europe in 1983 (Brussels).
COTTRELL, ANN BAKER & M. POMMERENKE (1987) Returning Students: A Comparison by Gender and Age. Paper presented at Pacific Sociological Association
DE CARLO, GIANCARLO (1974) Universita e territorio, in: P.BISOGNO et al(Eds) *Universita : Diagnosi e terapia* (Roma, Officina Edizioni).
DE FRANCESCO, CORRADO and PAOLO TRIVELLATO (1976) L'universita di massa negli anni "70" in Italia, *Inchiesta* 21, pp.74-83 .
DEI, MARCELLO and MAURIOZIO ROSSI (1978) *Sociologia della Scuola Italiana* (Bologna, Il Mulino).
DONATI, PIERPAOLO (1978) *La donna nella terza Italia.*
EUROSTAT: *Regional Statistics* (1977) (Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
FISHER-THOMPSON, JEANNE & JULIE A. KUHN (1981) *Re-entry Women: Relevant Statistics* (Washington, D.C., Project on the Status and Education of Women).
FONTANA, MARIA ROSARIA (1977) La disoccupazione intellettuale nella provincia di Frosinone, *Sociologia* 11, 1, 141-78.
GALLUP, GEORGE (1978) *The International Gallup Polls: Public Opinion* (Wilmington, Delavare, Scholarly Resources Inc.).
GILMOZZI, CLAUDIA ZANON (1981) Casalinga: un problema di casalinghita si soffoca?, *Donna e Societa* 60, 151-157.
GREENBLATT, BERNARD & LOIS EBERHARD (1973) *Children on Campus* (Washington D.C., U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau).
HECHINGER, FRED M. (1984) Adjoining Schools in Italy Show Contrasts, *New York Times*, June 19.
HEYNS, BARBARA & JOYCE ADAIR BIRD (1979) *Recent Trends in the Higher Education of Women,* Research Conference on Educational Environments and the Undergraduate Woman (Wellesley, MA., Wellesley College).
Higher Education Daily (1981),25 March. (Cited in Fisher-Thompson and Kuhn)
Index to International Public Opinion. (1981-2, 1982-3) (Westport, CT., Greenvich Press).
ILO(1983) *Yearbook of Labor Statistics* (Geneva, International Labor Office).
ISTAT (yearly) *Annuario Statistico dell istruzione Italiana, 16* (Roma, Istituto Centrale di Statistica).
ISTAT (1976) Indagine speciale sulle caratteristiche degli studenti universitari iscritti al primo anno di corso , *Bolletino Mensili di Statistica* (Roma, Istituto Centrale di Statistica).
LAURENZI, LAURA (1984) Sola, coraggiosa e colta, molto piu forte dell'uomo ecco la donna degli anni '80, *Cronaca*, 8, p.7.
LIQUORI, MARIA & SUZY VENEZIANO (1979) Condizione sociale e condizione lavorativa degli studenti universitari napoletani, *Inchiesta*, 37, pp. 24-34.
Manpower Comments (1980) 17, no. 8, p. 26

MARTINOTTI, GUIDO & ROBERTO MOSCATI (1982) Introduzione: vecchi e nuovi problemi dell'universita italiana, in G. MARTINOTTI & R. MOSCATI (Eds) *Lavorare N Nella universita Oggi* (Milan, Franco Agnell Editore).

MAZZOCCHI, GIANCARLO (1979) La famiglia nella realta socio-economic italiana: aspetti demografico-economici, in LAZZATI et al (Eds) *La famiglia crocevia della tensione tra pubblico e privato* (Milano, Vita e Pensiero).

MIEGGE, MARIO (1977) Professionalita, formazione e controllo sociale, *Inchiesta*, Jan-Feb, pp.18-31.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS *The Condition of Education: A Statistical Report* (Washington, D.C., Government Publications Office).

OECD (1975, 1981) *Educational Statistics Yearbook*, vol. 2 (Paris).

PARSONS, ANNE (1967) Is the Oedipus Conflict Universal? A South Italian (Garden City, NY, The Natural History Press).

PIGNATELLI, PAOLA COPPOLA (1974) Note per una didattica alternativa, in P. BISOGNO et al (Eds) *Universita: diagnosi e terapia* (Roma, Officina Edizioni).

PILATI, PAOLA (1983) Lady Rampante, *L'Espresso*, 7 Aug., pp.38-45.

POMMERENKE, MARLENE (1984) Motivations and Obstacles of Re-Entry Students , (San Diego State University, Unpublished MA Thesis).

Public Opinion (1981, Aug.-Sept) American Enterprise Institute.

RICE, JOY K. (1975) Continuing Education for Women 1960-75: a Critical Approach, *Educational Record* 56 , (Fall), pp. 240-9.

SARACENO, CHIARA (1984) The Social Construction of Childhood: Child Care and Education Policies in Italy and the United States, *Social Problems* , 31, pp.351-63.

SARACENO, CHIARA (1979) Cariche di famiglia, *Inchiesta* , 40, pp.11-34.

SARTORI, GIOVANNI (1975) The Italian University System, in: P.SEABURY (Ed) *Universities in the Western World* (New York, The Free Press).

SCOTT, NANCY(1980) *Returning Women Students: A Review of Research and Descriptive Studies* (National Association for Women Deans, Administrators and Counselors).

Standard Education Almanac (1983-4) (Chicago, Marquis Professional Publications).

SURO, MARY DAVIS (1986)Italy's Males are, Well, Italian, *New York Times* (February 14).

TAINES, BEATRICE (1973) Older Women, Newer Students, *Community College Journal*, August-September, p.17.

THOM, MARY (1984) The All-Time Definitive Map of the Gender Gap, *MS*, July , pp. 55-60.

UNESCO (1983) *Statistical Yearbook* (Paris, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

UN (1982) *Demographic Yearbook* (New York, United Nations).

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (1978) Back to School at 35 and Over , Special Labor Force Report #227 (Washington, D.C.. Bureau of Labor Statistics).

WELLS, JEAN A. (1973) *Continuing Education for Women: Current Developments* (Washiongton, D.C., U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau)

WISE, W.M. (1961) Student Personnel Work- Future Trends. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 39, p. 705.

WULIGER, ROBERT (1975) Italian Universities and the Social Crisis, *AAUP Bulletin* 61, pp. 232-8.

ZANATTA, ANNA LAURA FADIGA (1976) *Il Sistema Scolastico Italiano* (Bologna, Il Mulino).